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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR GEORGIA MONITORING GROUP AND EUR/CARC

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [RU](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: GEORGIA: SITREP 32: RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA LEAFLETS
DISSEMINATED OVER ABKHAZIA

REF: TBILISI 1571

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN F. TEFFT FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) Summary. UNOMIG observers reported a Russian propaganda campaign in Abkhazia. OSCE observers said that they have access to the Russian "buffer zone," but still have no access beyond the former administrative border into South Ossetia (with the exception of Mission Head Hakala's September 15 meeting in Tskhinvali with Russian FM Lavrov). Nino Burjanadze invited several opposition politicians, including one who was demanding her resignation six months ago, to her office to discuss ideas about overcoming the crisis. Georgian Prime Minister Lado Gurgenedze and NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer signed a document establishing a NATO-Georgian Commission. The Georgian Government submitted a budgetary amendment to the Parliament for consideration of the increase in expenditures. The Minister of Health and Deputy Ministers of Internal Affairs and Defense reported the final data regarding Georgian government casualties during the Russian aggression. The press reported that an elderly man was shot in the head by Russian soldiers after their military vehicle hit him while he was on a bicycle. Russian soldiers withdrew from five major checkpoints in western Georgia, near Poti, Senaki and Zugdidi, but reportedly remain in villages in the Tsalemjikha district of the Samegrelo region, northeast of Zugdidi. End Summary.

LEAFLETS OVER GALI, NEW CHECKPOINT IN ABKHAZIA

¶2. (C) UNOMIG observers reported that on September 15 at 1145 one Mi-24 and one Mi-8 helicopter dropped four leaflets over the Georgian enclave of Gali in Abkhazia. The leaflets, all in Russian, were propaganda against President Saakashvili and the United States. One of the leaflets contained statements from European officials negating the possibility of Georgia's entry into NATO and another was from Russo-Georgian groups within Russia calling for regime change in Tbilisi. On the same day, UNOMIG observers noted a new Russian checkpoint near Muzhava, on the Georgian side, close to the Enguri Dam. Four Russians BTRs (armored personnel carriers) were noted driving up and down the streets of Muzhava, making local residents hesitant to send their children to school for fear of their safety.

¶3. (SBU) National Security Council Chairman Lomaia told visiting EUR DAS Bryza that Russian soldiers withdrew from five major checkpoints in western Georgia, near Poti, Senaki and Zugdidi, but reportedly remain in villages in the Tsalemjikha district of the Samegrelo region, northeast of Zugdidi. Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Georgia (UNOMIG) Ivo Petrov told visiting NAC permreps that UNOMIG is now conducting weekly visits to the Kodori and assessing the situation.

OSCE: GEORGIANS HARASSED BY OSSETIANS

14. (C) OSCE observer Hekki Lehtonen said that observers have access to the Russian "buffer zone" but still have no access beyond the former administrative border into South Ossetia. Observers reported that on September 15, residents from the Georgian enclave of Eredvi had taken a bus into South Ossetian territory, where three Ossetians armed with knives had beaten up the bus driver and smashed windows in the bus. The bus driver was taken to hospital in Gori. In the Georgian village of Koshka, Ossetians had attempted to steal a Georgian's vehicle from in front of his house. Lehtonen said that many Georgians return to work their fields in South Ossetia by day, but always return by dusk to Gori. Lehtonen's assessment was that residents in the villages of Karaleti and Variani were feeling more secure now, but in the villages further north, Georgians continue to be afraid of Ossetian harassment.

15. (C) In a September 16 meeting with NATO Permreps, OSCE Head of Mission Terhi Hakala described her September 15 trip to Tskhinvali and meeting with Russian FM Lavrov. She reported that she had argued for access to South Ossetia for OSCE observers, but that Lavrov would go no further than to acknowledge that the Medvedev-Sarkozy plan gave the original eight OSCE observers the right to patrol within the former conflict zone. Hakala said that the OSCE monitor office (and headquarters of the Economic Development project) in Tskhinvali had been looted and was partially damaged; however, it was still standing and OSCE local staff were continuing to work for the organization.

TBILISI 00001596 002 OF 003

BURJANADZE MEETS OPPOSITION LEADERS

16. (U) According to press reports, former Speaker Nino Burjanadze invited several opposition politicians, including one who was demanding her resignation six months ago, to discuss ideas for overcoming the current crisis. New Rights Party leader Davit Gamkrelidze, former presidential candidate Levan Gachechiladze, Republican Party leader Davit Usupashvili, the media and analysts attended the meeting. Referring to his previous hunger strike in March outside of Burjanadze's office in the Parliament demanding her resignation, Gamkrelidze said that he could hardly imagine sitting together at the same table with Burjanadze, but the current crisis required setting the past aside because regime change was necessary. After the meeting, Gachechiladze also demanded Saakashvili's resignation. Usupashvili also called again for Saakashvili's resignation, but believed that even with a new President the country could not move forward due to the existing Parliament and existing powers of the President. Usupashvili claimed that early Parliamentary elections in spring 2009 would be the best way out of the crisis, but freedom of media and reform of the election system were essential. Burjanadze was cautious about making any demands and agreed to establish a working group.

NATO-GEORGIA COMMISSION INAUGURATED

17. (U) Georgian Prime Minister Gurgenedze and NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer, signed a document establishing a NATO-Georgian Commission. An inaugural session of the commission was held following the signing ceremony. Both Gurgenedze and Scheffer called the commission "a milestone" in the relations.

BUDGETARY AMENDMENTS PROPOSED

18. (U) According to press reports, the Georgian government has submitted a budgetary amendment to the Parliament that would increase expenditures by GEL 255,400,000 (approximately USD 178,600,000). The amendment will reflect an additional inflow of GEL 340 million (approximately USD 237,760,000) in foreign grants as part of aid from donor organizations and

governments. The amendment will also aim to cut funding from some ministries and redirect them to reconstruction efforts. The bulk of the additional funding, GEL 150 million (approximately USD 104,900,000), would go to the Ministry of Defense. An additional GEL 107,500,000 (approximately USD 75 million) would fund a housing program for IDPs. GEL 100 million (approximately USD 70 million) would be allocated to the Ministry of Interior. GEL 35 million (approximately USD 24.5 million) will be allocated for infrastructure development projects in Tbilisi. GEL 21.5 million (approximately USD 15 million) would be allocated for the grape harvest to subsidize additional grape prices sold by farmers. GEL 16 million (approximately USD 11.2 million) would be allocated to the Ministry of Labor, Health, and Social Welfare to cover costs of medical treatment of those injured in the conflict. GEL 14 million (approximately USD 980,000) would be allocated to the Ministry of Education in part to help reconstruct schools damaged in the conflict. The funding of several ministries would be cut, including the Ministry of Energy - GEL 12.2 million; Ministry of Finance - GEL 4 million; Ministry of Culture - GEL 3 million; Ministry of Foreign Affairs - GEL 1.3 million; Ministry of Environment - GEL 1.1 million; funding for Parliament would also be reduced by GEL 2 million.

FINAL DATA OF GEORGIAN GOVERNMENT CASUALTIES DURING THE RUSSIAN AGGRESSION

¶9. (U) According to press reports, the Minister of Health and Deputy Ministers of Internal Affairs and Defense reported the final data regarding the Georgian government casualties during the Russian aggression. The total number of dead from the Georgian side is 372. Of those, 188 were from the Shida Kartli region. According to the officials, most of the causes of death were either from gunshot wounds or from being burned. The Ministry of Internal Affairs lost 16 officers, two of whom were killed a few days ago at police checkpoints along the Abkhaz border. Of Ministry of Defense soldiers involved in the conflict, 168 were killed and 110 of those have been identified. DNA analysis is being used to determine the identities of the remaining soldiers.

RUSSIANS SHOOT 75-YEAR-OLD GEORGIAN AFTER HITTING HIM WITH THEIR VEHICLE

¶10. (U) According to press reports, a group of Russian

TBILISI 00001596 003 OF 003

soldiers were deploying military hardware to the Samegrelo region when their military vehicle hit a 75-year-old man riding a bicycle. After the incident, the Russians and the man got into an argument. The Russians then allegedly fatally wounded him with a gunshot to the head.
TEFFT